

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 December 2023
Report of: Chief Executive
Title of Report: Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review:
 Council Action Plan

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update Cabinet on the Council's Action Plan in response to the Corporate Peer review feedback and recommendations (July 2023).
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	Well-run Council
Policy Framework:	None.

Recommendations:	That Cabinet resolves to:
1.	Approve the Council's Action Plan in response to the July 2023 Corporate Peer review feedback and recommendations; and
2.	Note the progress that has already been made towards the July 2023 Peer Review recommendations, which are set out in the Action Plan.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Oxford City Council Local Government Peer Challenge Feedback report, July 2023
Appendix 2	Oxford City Council Action Plan in response to the July 2023 Corporate Peer review feedback and recommendations

Introduction and background

1. The Council invited in a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review Team to conduct a review in July 2023, and this was followed by a feedback report detailing the strengths of the Council, the issues considered, and areas for further improvement and key recommendations. (Appendix 1).

2. A report was taken to Cabinet (October 2023) updating members on the key scope and process, recommendations from the July 2023 Peer Review Team, and to outline the future Action Plan.
3. The Peer Review Team made ten key recommendations that it believes will help the Council progress the work on which it has embarked. The recommendations and the Council's responses are as follows:
 - Recommendation 1 - Co-design shared outcomes: Convene anchor institutions working together on shared outcomes and drive how these are delivered and procured.
 - New actions include:
 - Launch of the Oxford West End Website
 - Establishing a developer led- skills and employment group
 - Embedding the Delivery and Place making partnership to engage on key work streams
 - Use partnerships and subgroups to inform development of our Corporate Strategy 2024/2028
 - Develop a Place and Movement Framework for City Centre and Northern Quarter
 - Deliver co-location pilot with the NHS at Leys Pools and Leisure Centre
 - Expand the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership.
 - Recommendation 2 – Prioritisation: Match ambitious plans to resources required to deliver and be deliberate about adding and removing projects when something new is added; Strategically sequence projects; Look to up-skill and agilely move around staff to resource our priorities.
 - New actions include:
 - Support clearer prioritisation through review of the Corporate Strategy 2024/2028
 - Ensure full assessment of capacity and resources required to deliver
 - More robust approach to stopping or re-profiling projects
 - Provide more flexible resource and assessment of roles with transferable skills to support projects more flexibly.
 - Recommendation 3 - Corporate centre / Programme Management: Ensure corporate control of all projects; Consider making permanent the current Project Management Office structure and investing in project management specialists; Look to upskill and equip staff with the necessary training; Ensuring corporate grip, overseeing the multiple projects - Fit for the Future change projects, capital programme, and the IT improvements.
 - New actions include:
 - Development for project management skills
 - Preferred Corporate KPIs selected for reporting against the Corporate Strategy 2024/2028.

- Recommendation 4 - Performance management: A framework properly linked to outcomes and aligned to the new strategy; intelligent use of data to improve service quality; a consistent performance and data driven culture embedded.
 - New actions include:
 - Preferred Operational KPIs for reporting against service delivery
 - A new automated performance dashboard
 - Revive use of insight and data tools and raise awareness of data available.
- Recommendation 5 - Leveraging and communicating the regeneration: Continue and go further with inclusive economy campaigning. Seeking to inform how the exciting regeneration projects can benefit all local residents.
 - New actions include:
 - Up weight our inclusive economy campaign
 - Link to work underway to develop a “Place Narrative” for Oxfordshire
 - Focus on how we engage our communities in our work on regeneration
 - Establish a partnership group of developers and landowners to look to co-ordinate and produce a framework for working on Community Employment Planning
 - Future iterations of our change capacity to continue to utilise internal resource creatively.
- Recommendation 6 - Organisational structure: When looking at structures – have an outcome focused mind-set, using data to drive policy and performance; Flexible use of resources to allow for agility to serve the delivery of projects; Having recruitment, retention and progression in mind.
 - New actions include:
 - Capital budget bids to support improvements to ways of working and our systems are included within this budget round
 - Setting out the long-term vision for use of the Town Hall.
- Recommendation 7 - Hybrid working/ IT infrastructure: Technologies and systems improved; More in person/ events/ team meetings – providing reason to be in; Team principles should be refreshed and emphasised.
 - New actions include:
 - OneDrive and SharePoint implementation
 - Improved capacity, resilience and development of our ICT support team
 - Internal communications campaign to promote in person collaboration and ways to bring people together.
- Recommendation 8 - Corporate Management Team and Cabinet: Forward plan meetings between the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet to co-design policy and keep all Cabinet members informed of projects across the Council.

- New actions include:
 - Reinstate regular and structured Corporate Management Team and Cabinet briefing meetings (completed)
 - Implement one Leader's Meeting a month as an invite for full Cabinet (completed).
 - Recommendation 9 - Prepare for the May 2024 induction process, continue to strengthen the training provision: for new members, new and existing Cabinet; Members – e.g. an annual Cabinet development day; Building capacity and expertise for the future.
 - *New actions include:*
 - Undertake an audit/canvas what training members want/need
 - Actively promote training and development opportunities to Members
 - Review and update, with a view to expanding, the member development programme
 - Review and redevelopment of the member induction training programme.
 - Recommendation 10 - The Oxford Model: Ensure there is an alignment between the Council's corporate plan and the business plans of the companies; Alignment of cultural values enabling a commercially focussed approach with the ethical and social values of the Council to deliver the Council's strategic ambition; Ensure effective client arrangements which act as a mechanism to prevent the escalation of operational matters to the shareholder; Ensure that as appropriate the organisation, partners and residents have a clear and consistent understanding of the reasons for and the intended benefits of the oxford Model.
 - New actions include:
 - Recruit to permanent strategic commissioning and clienting role
 - Develop and publish an agreed definition of the Oxford Model
 - Undertake review of Commissioning and Clienting arrangements
 - Clarify role, responsibilities of OCC clients as part of appraisal objectives
 - Review company governance against recently published LATCo guidance
 - Work with ODS and OX Place on development of model to respond to changes in council funding streams
 - Ensure a single budget setting timetable is understood.
4. This report provides an update on the progress of the Council's Action Plan in response to the ten key recommendations made by the Peer Review Team.

Action Plan (Appendix Two)

5. The Council's Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service have continued to proactively consider, discuss and reflect on the recommendations of the Peer

Review Team, and commenced work early to start developing an Action Plan. The Action Plan is appended to this report at appendix two and the Cabinet is asked to approve the action plan.

6. The Action Plan is published in line with the LGA reporting timelines “within eight weeks of the CPC report’s publication”.
7. An annual report will be taken to Cabinet providing an update on progress against the Action Plan.

Future key milestones

8.



Financial implications

9. All strands within the Action Plan (appendix two) will need to align with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan utilising existing resources and capacity.
10. Some individual actions will be subject to successful budget bids (e.g. Capital budget bids to support improvements to ways of working and our systems are included within this budget round) or securing additional funding (e.g. Secure funding through Future Oxfordshire Partnership for the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership manager to continue progressing work streams).
11. A £150k per annum bid in the budget for monitoring will be used to create a small permanent Corporate Project Management Office, this will provide support to projects across the organisation and lead on reporting into the Corporate Management Team and other corporate boards. It will also be used to bring together reporting and management on risk, corporate KPI's and other assurance activity.

Legal issues

12. There are no legal implications for the Council arising from this report.

Level of risk

13. There are no risk implications for the Council arising from this report.

Equalities impact

14. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not necessary for this report. Equalities Impact is intrinsically built into the Council’s policies and alongside the key strategies. The Council will continue to monitor equalities impact as programmes grow and develop.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

15. There are no carbon and environmental implications for the Council arising from this report.

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Background Papers: None	
1	Oxford City Council - Corporate Peer Challenge Position Statement, July 2023 (Confidential)